JAMES McBEY

M. KNOEDLER & COMPANY
14 EAST FIFTY-SEVENTH STREET
NEW YORK

CATALOGUE
OF AN EXHIBITION OF
ETCHINGS BY
JAMES McBEY

DECEMBER 1ST TO 11TH, 1926

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WHEN I look at McBey's work in its different phases from year to year, from subject to subject, it seems always to show new zest and eagerness, and ardour unabated in the search of fresh experience. As each new set of his work has come forward, there has always been a suggestion of the rising tide. In each set there is always one that quietly and unobtrusively creeps beyond all its forerunners. And as it swells and advances, his work seems to embody less particularisation, and an increasing tendency to detachment and abstraction, to a search not for the circumstances but for the essence and spirit of life and nature. It is not the crowd that interests him, but its movement; not the sea, but its power and its menace; not the desert, but its vastness and its silence; not the man, but the mind behind the mask of the features. Others have made notable etchings of cathedrals and crumbling architecture, of ships and the seashore, of wide stretches of landscape. All this McBey has done; but why does he give, every now and then, the little more (and how much it is!) that few have ever given? Can I explain what I mean by saying that he leads us to a realisation of rhythmical forces in life and nature, and to a perception, not merely of the actual, but of the poetry and romance behind the actual; to an understanding of the deep and moving drama that always throbs beneath the surface of ordinary, everyday life; to a realisation that man and his works, all things animate and inanimate, sea and sky and all that in them is, have a past and a future as well as a present? That is what I have tried to indicate in speaking of such plates as *The Pool*, *The Sussex*, *Dawn*, *The Gale at Port Erroll*, *The Pianist*, and *The Ebb Tide*.

He has achieved his success by methods of his own. Except

perhaps in some of his earlier plates, he is not directly influenced by any man or school. Just as each of us inherits something—of colour, habit, character—from his ancestors, so each of McBey's works owes something to his great forbears (even to his great contemporaries), and yet has its own body, its own colour, its own soul—possibly an immortal soul. If he has been influenced by Rembrandt, by Whistler, by Haden, by Forain, he has been influenced more by their outlook than by their methods. They are the stars by which he has sometimes steered his course. But he has never been an imitator. He accepts each subject, as Sir Walter Raleigh recently wrote about Whistler, "as presenting a new set of conditions to be studied and subdued, by new devices, to the service of beauty." Great traditions of the past, splendid stirrings of the present, may act as leaven to his yeast; but he never asks himself, "How would Rembrandt have seen this?" or "How would Whistler have set it on the copper?" He prefers to begin at a new beginning, and create afresh. And he is like Rembrandt and Whistler, not so much in his work as in his resistance to the besetting temptation of every artist—the danger of being led by a past success into formula and repetition. It is a feature of his art that he has always been untiring in adventure, seeking always to find the new peak, the further view.

. . . One cannot overlook the part played in his work by paper and by printing. Ever since his first visit to Amsterdam in 1910, he has been an enthusiastic collector of old paper. He felt, from the first, that it had qualities of tone and texture and durability that made it desirable for the printing of an etching, and since then "he has used no other." And he is right; for, to quote his own words, "the skin of old paper has become soft and velvety, due to the action of time on the surface size, while the strength of the actual paper has not been impaired.". . . Every proof is printed with his own hands and carefully considered before he writes his signature

beneath. And the collector may like to know that he may own proofs printed on paper coming from the volumes in which Rembrandt kept his prints, or from one that belonged to Sir Peter Lely in 1669. . . . But sheets of old paper are so varied that each calls for a different kind of printing. "When the artist himself prints," he says, "the printing may be regarded as actually a continuation of his etched work, the combination of both culminating in the finished proof." . . I still believe that McBey's work will survive all fluctuating memories and sympathies, just because it has an individual soul that is imperishable. So, like the mounted figures that in his *Dawn* set out into the boundless desert, let my belief in his work go out, along with it, into the vast incertitude of the future.

MARTIN HARDIE

CATALOGUE

1 Portsoy Harbour
Hardie 8 21 *proofs*

2 Victoria Bridge, Aberdeen
Hardie 12 5 *proofs only*

3 North Bridge, Edinburgh
Hardie 22 10 *proofs only*

4 Plumstone Close
Hardie 24 10 *proofs only*

5 Moray House
Hardie 30 5 *proofs only*

6 The Cowgate, Edinburgh
Hardie 33 26 *proofs*

7 Moonlight in the Wood
Hardie 45 3 *proofs only*

8 Morning, Catterline
Hardie 56 40 *proofs*

9 Enkhuisen
Hardie 67 40 *proofs*

10 Hoorn Cheesemarket
Hardie 69 8 *proofs only*
The Cheesemarket in the Rodesteen at Hoorn. To the left, a bronze statue inscribed Jan Pietersz. Coen 1587-1620.

11 Ransdorp
Hardie 75 41 *proofs*

12 Old Machar Towers. (No.2)
Hardie 85 *Proof No.* 2 4 *proofs printed*

13 Burgos
Hardie 93 25 *proofs*

14 Avila
Hardie 94 30 *proofs*

15 Valencia Beach
Hardie 97 30 *proofs*

16 Benicarlo
Hardie 100 27 *proofs*

17 Vinaroz
Hardie 101 22 *proofs*

18 Vinaroz: Boat Building
Hardie 102 40 *proofs*

19 The Picador Incites the Bull
Hardie 104 30 *proofs*

20 The Picador Unhorsed
Hardie 106 20 *proofs*

21 The Banderillas
Hardie 107 27 *proofs*

22 The Towy at Carmarthen
Hardie 111 30 *proofs*

23 Carmarthen
Hardie 112 20 *proofs*

24 A View in Wales
Hardie 113 40 *proofs*

25 April in Kent
Hardie 114

26 The Skylark
Hardie 117

27 "1588"
Hardie 123 (A) *First State*
(B) *Proof C of* 12 *proofs*

28 The Bread Market, Tetuan
Hardie 127

29 The Orange Seller
Hardie 128

30 The Jewish Quarter, Tetuan
Hardie 129

31 The Story-Teller
Hardie 130

32 Gunsmiths, Tetuan
Hardie 132

33 Beggars, Tetuan (No.2)
Hardie 134

34 El Soko
Hardie 135

35 A Moroccan Market
Hardie 136

36 The Approach to Tetuan
Hardie 137

37 Tetuan
Hardie 138

38 The Ford
Hardie 140

39 Tangier
Hardie 141 (A) *Trial proof* 2
(B) *Published State*

40 The Timber Mill
Hardie 142 *Trial proof B*
Interior of the timber mill at Overschie, between Rotterdam and Delft.

41 Grimnessesluis
Hardie 143
The Grimnessesluis, a canal at Amsterdam

42 Penzance
Hardie 144 (A) *Trial proof* 8
(B) *Published State*

43 Repairing a Barge
Hardie 148

44 The Pool
Hardie 150 (A) *Trial proof* 9
(B) *Published State*

45 Gamrie
Hardie 151
A view, from a height, over the harbour of Gamrie (the old Scots name for Gardenstone), in Morayshire.

46 The Moray Firth
Hardie 152

47 Sea and Rain
Hardie 153

48 Buchan
Hardie 154

49 Newburgh
Hardie 155
The village of Newburgh is seen across a bend of the river Ythan. Knockhall Castle stands against the sky on the left.

50 Disquietude (Portrait of Mrs. Martin Hardie)
Hardie 156 (A) *Trial proof* 5
(B) *Published State*

51 Night in Ely Cathedral
Hardie 161

52 The Isle of Ely
Hardie 162

53 Portrait of Martin Hardie (No. 1)
Hardie 163 24 *proofs*

54 Portrait of Martin Hardie (No. 2)
Hardie 167 24 *proofs*

55 The Crucifix, Boulogne
Hardie 168

56 A Norman Port
Hardie 169

57 The Quai Gambetta, Boulogne
Hardie 170

58 The Sussex
Hardie 171

59 Rouen
Hardie 172

60 The Seine at Rouen
Hardie 173

61 The Somme Front
Hardie 174

62 Français Inconnus
Hardie 176

63 Spring, 1917
Hardie 177

64 Albert
Hardie 179

65 Ras-el-Ain
Hardie 180

66 Dawn. The Camel Patrol Setting Out
Hardie 181

This and the following four plates deal with the work of a Camel Patrol starting from a post on the Suez Canal into the desert of Sinai towards Beersheeba.

67 The Mid-Day Halt
Hardie 182 (A) *Trial proof* 2
(B) *Published State*

68 The Desert of Sinai (No. 2)
Hardie 184

69 Sunset: Wadi-um-Mukhsheib
Hardie 185

70 Strange Signals
Hardie 186

71 A Deserted Oasis
Hardie 187

72 The Silk Dress
Hardie 188

73 Margot as Lopokova
Hardie 189

74 The Pianist
Hardie 190

75 Dust, Beersheba
Hardie 193

76 The Sniper (No. 2)
Hardie 195

77 The First Sight of Jerusalem
Hardie 197

78 The Advance on Jerusalem
Hardie 198

79 The Surrender of Jerusalem
Hardie 199

80 Gaza: Prisoners of War
Hardie 202

81 Gun Fire, Mount of Olives
Hardie 204

82 Jerusalem from Olivet
Hardie 205 (A) *Trial proof* 5
(B) *Published State*

83 The Dead Sea
Hardie 206

84 Hermon: Cavalry Moving on Damascus
Hardie 207 (A) *Trial proof* 7
(B) *Published State*

85 A Flood in the Fens
Hardie 209

86 Macduff
Hardie 210

87 Brightlingsea (No. 2)
Hardie 212

88 Gerona
Hardie 213

89 Antwerp
Hardie 214

90 Gale at Port Erroll
Hardie 215

91 The Ebb Tide
Hardie 216

92 Veere
Hardie 218

93 The Squall, Kampen
Hardie 219

94 The Zuider Zee
Hardie 220

95 Zaanstreek
Hardie 221

96 Mersea: Sunset
Hardie 222

97 Bosham

98 Hastings

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